



## BIOTERRORISM

### WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM?

- Bioterrorism proved to be a significant public health threat during the Fall of 2001 when Anthrax outbreaks occurred in the United States using the mail as a source of exposure.
- Response to a bioterrorism event requires rapid deployment of limited public health resources in order to save lives and prevent others from becoming ill.
- The nation's public health infrastructure currently is not adequate to detect and respond to a large scale bioterrorist event.

### WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

CDC established a **Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Program** to ensure the rapid development of federal, state, and local capacity to address potential bioterrorism events. The program integrates planning and training to facilitate the development of core capacities in the primary elements of public health preparedness, including surveillance, epidemiology, rapid laboratory diagnosis, emergency response, and communications systems.

- CDC maintains a cooperative agreement program for state and selected local public health departments to help improve their preparedness and response capabilities for bioterrorism. Substantial additional funding is available for 2002 as a result of an emergency supplemental appropriation to augment state and local planning and preparedness efforts.
- CDC has identified the biological agents most likely to be involved in a terrorist attack and is working with states to assist in the detection and medical management of exposure to these agents.
- CDC has established a Rapid Response and Advanced Technology laboratory that can provide rapid identification of naturally-occurring biological agents that are rarely seen in the United States.
- During the months following the World Trade Center attack and Anthrax outbreaks in late 2001, the National Pharmaceutical Stockpile Program deployed critically needed caches of medical materiel to assist state and local officials responding to these tragic events.
- A nationwide, integrated information, communications, and training network, consisting of the Health Alert Network (HAN) and the Epidemic Information Exchange (*Epi-X*), proved to be an invaluable mechanism for rapid dissemination of information. Communication tools included early-warning broadcast alerts, laboratory and treatment protocols that were used to help save lives and prevent additional illness by state and local health departments.

### WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

Together, CDC and state and local health departments will:

- Continue to enhance public health infrastructure for bioterrorism response;
- Continue to develop response capacity;
- Provide training in bioterrorism preparedness and response for the public health workforce;
- Continue to enhance the national pharmaceutical stockpile and information systems.

*For more information on this and other CDC programs, visit [www.cdc.gov/programs](http://www.cdc.gov/programs).*

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